

The Dawn of a New Faith

KAPUR SINGH

THE manner in which Guru Gobind Singh proved his thorough knowledge of the art of dramaturgy on Baisakhi day, 30 March 1699, is fairly well known, but not the revolutionary ideas which inspired it.

It is common knowledge that on this memorable Baisakhi day Guru Gobind Singh, "called a big meeting at Anandpur. When all were sitting, he drew out his sword and cried, 'Is there anyone here who would lay down his life for *dharma*?'"

"At this the whole assembly was thrown into consternation, but the Guru went on repeating his demand. On the third call, Daya Ram of *kṣatriya* caste, of Lahore rose from his seat and offered himself. The Guru took him into the adjoining enclosure and soon came out with the blood dripping sword in hand and shouted again before the multitude, 'Is there any other Sikh here who will offer himself as sacrifice for the cause of *dharma*?'"

In a like manner four more men offered themselves as a sacrifice and

"Guru then brought out all these five persons in new uniforms and presented them to the assembly."*

These five were then baptized with what is known as the baptism of the double-edged sword and were then knighted as *singhs*, as the Five Beloved Ones, the first members of the order of the Khalsa into which the Guru himself begged to be, and was, baptized and initiated as the sixth.

One Sohan Lal Suri, an official in the Secretariate of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, employed as the royal historiographer but at the same time a paid secret agent of the East India Company, wrote a comprehensive history of the Sikhs called the *Umdatut Twarikh*. An appendix to the first volume of that book was taken from the manuscript *Twarikhe Hind* written in 1818 by Ahmed Shah Batalia. Another historian, Bute Shah, alias Ghulam Mohiuddin, also wrote a history of the Sikhs, *Twarikhe Punjab*, still in manuscript form, which bears the date of its completion

*A Short History of the Sikhs by Teja Singh and Ganda Singh, Vol. I, P. 68.

as 1848, the days which saw the last flickers of the Sikh Empire. All these historians record, almost identically, that on this memorable occasion, after the Guru had baptized the Five Beloved and knighted them as the first members of the order of the Khalsa, he addressed the great gathering of the Sikhs, saying among other things:

"I wish you all to embrace one creed and follow one path, rising above all differences of the religion as now practiced. Let the four Hindu castes, who have different *dharma*s laid down for them in the *śāstras*, containing institutes of *varṇāśrama dharma*, abandon them altogether and, adopting the way of mutual help and cooperation, mix freely with one another. Let no one deem himself superior to another. Do not follow the old scriptures. Let none pay homage to the Ganges and other places of pilgrimage, which are considered to be holy in the Hindu religion, or worship the Hindu deities such as Rama, Krishna, Brahma, Durga, etc. But all should cherish faith in the teachings of Guru Nanak and his successors. Let men of the four castes receive my baptism of the double-edged sword, eat out of the

same vessel and feel no aloofness from, or contempt for, one another."*

Both these Muslim historians, one of whom wrote before the Sikh sovereignty in the Punjab was established and the other after it was extinguished, concur in that during the first few days after this memorable Baisakhi some 80,000 men received the baptism of the double-edged sword to join the order of the Khalsa.

Sikh authors of Gursobha and Suraj Parkash both list the first ordinance which the Guru issued to the Sikh congregations throughout India, Assam, Ceylon, Ghazna and Kabul:

"In future the Sikhs shall come into my presence wearing long hair. Once a Sikh is baptized, he shall never shave. He should not use tobacco and other intoxicants and all Sikhs should henceforth receive the baptism of the double-edged sword."

Be it remembered, however, that, although the baptism by the sword was a modification of, and not an

*Sudharampundrika, Ch. I, describes the *bodhisatta* Manjusri, as "bearing a double-edged sword, that clean, discriminating weapon." There is a remarkable likeness between the double-edged sword preserved at Anandpur as the sword with which Guru Gobind Singh stirred the baptismal waters on 30 March 1699 and the double-edged sword held in the right hand of bronze *padmasana* image of Manjusri sculptured in Java in the 7th century and now in the Berlin Museum. It is reproduced in Grunwedel's, *Budhist Art in India*, P. 200.

Compare this esoteric significance of the double-edged sword with the exhortation of Guru Gobind Singh to the Khalsa bidding them to "take up the sword of the true knowledge in hand and destroy the illusion and ignorance of the mind, from the very roots:

gyān ki baḍhṇī man hāth le, kātartā kutvār buhāre."

innovation on, the accepted forms and usages practiced by the Sikhs and ordained by the predecessor Gurus, the injunctions regarding abstinence from tobacco, intoxicants and shaving and trimming the hair were merely reiterations with emphasis on their drastic observance. There is ample testimony in the meagre contemporary Sikh records and writings that from the very beginning almost all the Gurus indicated sufficiently clearly that the type of man and society at which they were aiming must have uncut hair as its symbol and as its testament of their spiritual integrity.

This, in short, is what happened on 30 March 1699 and this was the beginning of the Khalsa which from its very birth has claimed the status of a new way of life, the third path, a separate community.

The Guru's own unambiguous claim was supported by the testimony of his contemporary non-Sikh historians and writers.

There is foreign as well as Indian opposition to this opinion. The scholarly author Sir Charles Eliot concludes that Guru Gobind Singh's "ordinances were successful in creating a tribe, almost a nation."* On the other hand, Arnold Toynbee in his

monumental work quite simply asserts that the Sikhs "are virtually a caste of the Hindus."**

It is, therefore, not without profit to analyze the basic ideas and their implications which underlay the happenings of 30 March 1699. What were the ideas to which Guru Gobind Singh tried to give concrete expression on this day of the Baisakhi?

It would seem that the concepts were five in number, symbolic of and synchronous in their configuration and *getalt*, though not their origin and introduction, with the Five Beloved whom the Guru created into his order of the Khalsa.

These five ideas are: (1) The absorption of the individual into the infinite Soul as the ultimate aim and *summum bonum* of human life and, as a corollary, religion and religious activity as the activity *par excellence*, worthy of serious minds. (2) A global fraternity in which this activity must be grounded and through which this ideal must permeate. (3) Acceptance of new principles of politics, subordinated to those of ethics, resulting in the universal acceptance of the tradition of open diplomacy. (4) Organization into the order of the Khalsa of those who agree to dedicate

* Hinduism and Buddhism by Sir Charles Eliot, Vol. II, P. 272.

**A Study of History by Arnold Toynbee, Vol. VII, P. 415.

their lives to these ideas, and (5) The vision of a new and regenerated humanity heralded by the Baisakhi of 1699 and symbolized by the day of Baisakhi.

By understanding the five ideas which stimulated the work and teachings of Guru Gobind Singh alone it is possible to understand the temper and soul of Sikh history and the significance of Guru Gobind Singh in the context of today.

The *summum bonum* as conceived by the best Hindu minds throughout the ages has been that the ultimate Reality is that which is the ground of the diversity of the conditioned existence, which is our phenomenal world. The *mokṣa*—liberation from this conditioned existence—is the ultimate aim. All the cults, *darśanas* and philosophies of India throughout immemorial ages represent a quest for ways and means of achieving such liberation. All the Sikh Gurus agreed with and accepted the axioms underlying such a quest, namely, the fundamental concepts of Brahma and Sansar. As with all the savants of the Hindu race, the Gurus also accepted these concepts as self-evident and, therefore, agreed with the basic Hindu faith that the paramount duty of the human individual was to demolish the partition which separated the Brahma and the

Sansar. In the very first stanza of Japu, Guru Nanak posed the question, "How shall then the truth be attained and the partition of falsehood be demolished?" Viewed thus, Sikhism is basically of Hindu genius, the Indian way of life, and it is no more than a cult of Hinduism.

The most fundamental and startling departure which the Sikh Gurus have made is from the social philosophy of Hinduism and this is what conspicuously divides the people who fall under the term Hinduism in its specific sense and those who go under the name of the Sikhs.

To define Hinduism as a religion and as a culture has been a most difficult task. It has been recognized generally that Hinduism has four facets: (1) it is an ethnical and racial group, (2) it represents a group of highly complex philosophic ideas, (3) it represents certain broad and distinguishable ways of life, and (4) it stands for a distinct and peculiar social organization. Ethnically and racially, modern Hinduism, that is, the Hinduism which took its final shape in the age of imperial Guptas and which had its inception and growth coeval with the rise and growth of Buddhism in India, is rooted in and confined to the Indian peninsula.

Sikhism is definitely and completely at variance with this facet of modern Hinduism. It clearly preaches and visualizes a universal culture and religion which knows of no racial or regional limitations. "The human race, in its spiritual and secular rights, is a universal brotherhood," said Guru Gobind Singh. This attitude and this declaration is not only a fundamental departure from the basic attitudes of modern Hinduism but also cannot be legitimately described as the reassertion of the older, Vedic and heterodox Buddhist point of view of the eligibility of the whole human race to the truths which are the pure and exclusive discovery of the genius of the Hindu race. This reassertion of the older heterodox attitude of willingness to admit into the spiritual fold of Hinduism the whole of humanity finds its most lofty and philosophic exposition in the writings of the modern *ṛṣi* Aurobindo, who represented that the truth capable of saving humanity is and shall be the product of Hindu genius forever and forever and that

through this humanity shall eventually be saved.*

The Sikh Gurus stand for a different, more amplified belief and another vision of the future world culture. They preached the doctrine of a growing culture coming to fruition through a synthesis, a mutual assimilation of the truths revealed in the consciousness of mankind as a whole. Guru Gobind Singh declared, "The Semitic and the Aryan soul, and all that is heterodox besides, spring from the same identical impulse and source and are converging towards the same goal."**

The second facet of Hinduism concerns four philosophic concepts which permeate and ferment Hinduism as its warp and woof and as its *elan vital*. These are the doctrines of (1) *karma*, (2) transmigration, (3) *dharma* and (4) *māyā*.

The doctrine of *karma* is what modern science calls the law of cause and effect but on the moral plane; that of transmigration is the belief in the continuity of the essence of human personality, irrespective of physical

* Life Divine by Sri Aurobindo, Vol. I, Ch. I.

***kartā karīm soī rāzak rahīm oī. dusro na bhed koī bhūl bhram mānbo.*

ek hī kī sev sabh hī ko gurdev ek, ek hī sarūp sabhī ek jot jānbo

Compare also the earlier declarations of the Sikh theologian, Bhai Gurdas, (1558—1637):

bārah pañth ikattar kar gurmukh gāḍī rāh calāyā.

Sikhism is a confluence of all the Aryan, Semitic and other paths, which now converge into this royal road.

Odes of Bhai Gurdas

birth and death; that of *dharma* is the identity of the moral categorical imperative with the inner essences of things and persons; and that of *māyā* is the conviction that what the world of existence reveals to us through our senses and mind is not real but misleading and illusory.

Sikhism, as preached by the Gurus and as finalized by Guru Gobind Singh, accepts all these four basic philosophic concepts though these concepts are in some respects differently interpreted and evaluated than in Hinduism. Viewed thus, Sikhism is essentially and basically a Hindu religion.

Grounded in, and arising out of, these four philosophic concepts are the way of life, the cults, the traditions of religion which constitute the main bodies of the Hindus. These traditions are represented by four main currents in the river of Hinduism which constitute the third facet of Hinduism and every philosophic system, every *darśana*, every Hindu orthodoxy, falls under or subserves one of these four traditions. They are: (1) *smārta*, (2) *vaiṣṇava*, (3) *śaiva*, and (4) *śākta*,

In the *smārta* tradition the fundamental spiritual activity consists of *yajña*, the sacrifice through which

super-human forces are sought to be appeased and harnessed to human welfare. This is the Vedic cult *par excellence*. Its basic activity is *yajña* and its fundamental doctrine is that of the *mantra* which postulates that the essence of things is represented by the words, the *śabda*, an idea which does not appear to be specifically Indo-Aryan for its traces are found in almost all civilizations. But its best exposition is given by the Mimamsa school which, in the 2nd century B.C., revived the verbal mysticism of the *smārta* Vedic tradition and maintained that every word was the reflection of an eternal prototype, an idea which Guru Gobind Singh specifically repudiated.* This tradition, this way of life, was superseded by the post-Vedic thought contained in the Upanishads and, since about 1000 B.C., the proto-historic period of Hinduism. This tradition with its philosophic doctrine of the *mantra* has not found any large number of direct adherents in Hinduism and even the Arya Samaj movement in North India, which apparently declares its undivided loyalty to the pristine Vedic way of life, in practice accepts this basis of Vedic religion with considerable mental reservations. Sikhism is grounded in

**nām ke jāpe to jo to pāiyat sadaiv nāth, pūdnā sadiv tuiñ tuiñ ucrat hai.*

the post-Vedic Upanishadic traditions and ways of thought insofar as this aspect of Hinduism is concerned.

There seems to be, however, one curious exception which places Sikhism, particularly as finalized by Guru Gobind Singh, in line with this *smārta* tradition. The ceremony of what is called *akhaṇḍ pāṭh* practiced among the Sikhs and claiming the approval and authority of Guru Gobind Singh himself is apparently a Vedic ceremony, both in form and context. Anybody who has witnessed this ceremony cannot fail to be struck by its complete and faithful resemblance to the Vedic ceremony of *yajña* based upon the doctrine of *mantram*. Just as the Vedic sacrificial performance requires the attendance of four officiating priests, *akhaṇḍ pāṭh* ceremony requires four readers and the continuous and uninterrupted reading of the Guru Granth apparently proceeds on the doctrine of *mantram*. But here the resemblance ends and on closer examination the *akhaṇḍ pāṭh* ceremony is found to resemble Tibetan and Far Eastern Buddhist practices "where religious chapel services consist not of prayers but of recitation of scriptures by which merit is acquired. This merit is then formally transferred by the officiants to some special object

such as the peace of the dead or the prosperity of the living suppliant."*

The second tradition of Hinduism is represented by *vaiṣṇavism*, the basic propositions of which are: (a) that Vishnu, the creator of the universe, incarnates himself from age to age to re-establish virtue and to destroy evil, to re-establish *varṇāśrama dharma*, in fact, as the Bhagvad Gita tells us, and (b) that mortals may achieve emancipation only through the loving adoration of any one of these incarnations which number between 10 and 22.

These propositions are repudiated completely and without ambiguity by the Sikh Gurus and thus those who see in the origin and contents of the Sikh movement anything of this *vaiṣṇavism* or the historical *bhakti* movement of the Middle Ages which was based on this *vaiṣṇavism* or cognate propositions show a complete lack of understanding of the real nature of Sikhism. Beyond being in historic proximity to this movement, Sikhism has nothing substantial in common with it. There are more cogent reasons to believe that the Sikh movement drew inspiration from the earlier and more ancient devotional upsurge of south India, represented by the 4th century

*Hinduism and Buddhism by Sir Charles Eliot, Vol. I, P. LXXXV-VI.

Trikkural composed by Tiruvalluvar and, subsequently, from the Nayanars of the 7th century whose sacred writings are compiled in Tirumurai.

On closer scrutiny of the *bhakti* movement and of the earlier southern devotional upsurge and on closer comparison of the forms and contents of both with the forms and patterns of the Sikh movement, it appears more reasonable to suppose that the Sikh movement drew some of its inspiration from the earlier movement in the south for the following reasons: (a) The Sikh Gurus were at pains to repudiate the basic proposition of the *bhakti* movement; (b) The compilation of the Granth by Guru Arjan has a close parallel with the compilation of Tirumurai, insofar as, like the Vedas, the Tirumurai and Guru Granth are in the nature of *samhitās*, compiled and edited, but not composed by, a single man, while the literature of the *bhakti* movement consists of books and not *samhitā* such as the Ramayana; (c) Tirumurai and Guru Granth claim the status of primary sacred writings of the Veda itself, while the *bhakti* movement claims for itself merely the status of secondary sacred literature; the latter is pious literature, relying on human argument and referring to

scripture as authority, while the former is scripture or sacred writing in its own right; (d) It is now becoming clear that in his extensive sojourn in the south Guru Nanak was influenced and impressed by the southern school of Indian music and its temple architecture* and many *rāgas* and *subrāgas*, employed by Guru Nanak and his successors in their poems, make their appearance for the first time in northern India as does the temple architectural design of lake-cum-structure such as the Golden Temple of Amsitsar and the Sikh temple of Tarn Taran. All facile speculations and assertions that Sikhism was an offshot of the northern *bhakti* movement and Guru Nanak was influenced by Kabir are found without any worth or substance and the irresistible conclusion is that Vaisnavism and Sikhism are poles apart.

Similarly, Sikhism is completely outside the place of Shaivism which views the god Shiva as the supreme God of the universe, primarily represented by his procreative symbol of the *lingam*.**

This *śaivasiddhānta* is closely allied to the *yoga* and theistic form of the

* Article by Dr. Mohan Singh, Punjab University, November 1954, Tribune, Ambala.

***kāhuñ lai pāhan pūj dhareā sir, kāhuñ lai līng gare laṭkēo*
kūr kirīā urjheo sabhī jag sri bhagvān ko bhed na pāeo.

śāṅkhya materialism. It accepts the three ultimate—*pati*, the Lord; *paśū*, His flock or souls, and *pāśa*, the noose or matter. Thus, Shiva is *Paśūpati* and on a terra-cotta seal of Mahenjodaro he is shown surrounded by animals. In each *kalpa*, world period, Shiva evolves the universe and souls and, so that he may act in them, he evolves his *śakti*, often called *Umā*. This act of evolution is his *Naṭarāja* form.

The forth tradition is the *śākta* tradition of Hinduism which views the godhead primarily in the form of a universal mother goddess and which is permeated by beliefs and practices of sexual mysticism and has been unequivocally disapproved of by the Sikh Gurus.* An integral part of this *śākta* tradition is the theory and practice of the *tantra*, which was represented by Mahayana Buddhism as developed in Bengal in the Middle Ages and by the *yogīs* in the Punjab. Guru Nanak's Sidh Gosht is primarily concerned with the repudiation of this cult as understood in northern India.

Avalon, in his *Principles of Tantra*, described the *tantra* as "the development of the *vaidika karmakāṇḍa* which, under the name of the Tantra Shastra, is the scripture of the *Kali Age*," quite a correct appraisal of the *tāntric* theory.

This is rejected by Sikhism and thus Sikhism does not fall under any of the main currents or traditions of what goes under the name of Hinduism and when a scholar or a careful student speaks of Hinduism he has these four essential currents of Hinduism in view.

It is in this sense that Sikhism is a non-Hindu religion, not a heterodox Hindu religion as Buddhism or Jainism, but a religion in the most modern and most accepted sense of the word, separate and distinct from Hinduism.

There is no doubt that when Guru Gobind Singh declared that the religion which he was finalizing and the religion which the Gurus had propagated was "the third religion, *tisar panth*," as distinct and different from Hinduism and Islam, Aryan and Semitic religions, complete in itself and distinct from both of these, aiming at the final synthesis and convergence of both these religious and cultural streams into itself, it was in this sense that the assertion was made

Now we come to the last of the four facets of Hinduism. Linked with the philosophic concept of *dharma* is the peculiarly Hindu principle of the organization of society

**kāmnā adhīn sadā dāmnā prabīn ek bhāvnā bihīn kaise pāve jagdīs ko*

expressed in the institution of the four classes of society, the doctrine of the *varṇāśrama dharma*. It is clear that by the end of the Rig Vedic period, the fourfold division of society—consisting of *brāhmaṇs*, *kṣtrīyas*, *vaiśyas* and *sūdras*—was regarded as fundamentally primeval and divinely ordained and in the Purusa-sukta of the Rig Veda the doctrine of the divine origin of this fourfold society from the body of primeval man, *Purūṣa*, is clearly laid down.*

This doctrine of *varṇāśrama dharma* is fundamentally different from the state of stratification of classes which existed in many ancient Indo-European communities and from the *Pistras* of ancient Iran. Throughout the ages, the concept of Hindu religion, Hindu philosophy, Hindu culture and Hindu civilization presupposes as valid the concept of *varṇāśrama dharma*, which is almost axiomatic. Even at the time of the beginning of the Christian era, which marks the highest peak of Hindu culture and philosophy when the system of the *śunayat* of Nagarjuna and the great synthesis of the Bhagvad Gita arose, the concept of *varṇāśrama dharma* was tacitly accepted in the

former and was explicitly re-affirmed in the latter.**

There is, therefore, no Hinduism, no Hindu culture, no Hindu society without a tacit acceptance and ever-renewed resurgence of this *varṇāśrama dharma* and the duties which it enjoins in the secular, economic and political spheres, in the life of each member of the Hindu society, of which duties the spiritual obligation, the *dharma*, is merely a super-structure, as Marxists would say.

The Sikh Gurus, including Guru Gobind Singh, completely and utterly repudiated not only the primeval and divine origin of the institute of *varṇāśrama dharma* but also its ethical validity or secular utility. Guru Gobind Singh also spoke of his descent into this phenomenal world of mundane affairs from the highest altitudes of the absolute for the avowed purpose "to propagate *dharma*, to exalt the virtuous and to destroy evil doers root and branch." But he spoke of *dharma* not in its specific sense of *varṇāśrama* duties, but in its generic sense of ethical virtue and his descent from the high, absolute spheres is in no way connected with the doctrine of the cyclic incarnation of

**brāhmaṇo 'sya mukhamāsīd bāhū rājanyaḥ kṛtāḥ
ūrū tadasya yadvaiśyaḥ padmāni sūdro ajāyat*

Rig Veda X: 90-12

**Bhagvad Gita, XVIII, 47.

the divinity (*sambhavāmi yugē yugē*). It was this *varṇāśrama dharma* that was repudiated with such vehemence by Guru Gobind Singh on Baisakhi, 30 March 1699.

In this respect then also the Sikhs and the Sikh way of life refuse to fall under the usual categories of the Hindu religion and it is clear that what Guru Gobind Singh aimed at was a complete and basic revolution in social ideals and social organization with a view to make it possible for Hindus to become equal and active members of an equal and global fraternity, and the model for such fraternity was to be the order of the Khalsa which Guru Gobind Singh initiated on this Baisakhi day. Such a global fraternity in which the genius of the Hindu race was undoubtedly to play a prominent part but which was to be founded on bases of all-round equality was completely alien to such beliefs that those born outside the Hindu society were doomed to an inferior status.

Apart from repudiating certain basic principles and institutes permeating Hinduism and holding forth others, what positive, specific means did Guru Gobind Singh intend should be applied for the creation and establishment of the global fraternity

consisting of equality of members and grounded in a universal culture which represents a living synthesis of all the great cultures of the world and which must ennoble and sustain human society in different climates and countries of the world?

It seems to us that there were two means which the Guru intended should be applied as a ferment and lever to raise human souls so that they might become suitable vehicles for the creation and sustenance of this human fraternity. One was his passionate conviction that the principles of politics which govern the relations between rulers and citizens and the relations between the states themselves should be so revolutionized as to bring them in complete accord with the principles of ethics.

In his two letters of admonition, *Fatehnama* and *Zafarnama*, to Emperor Aurangzeb after his eviction from the fortress of Anandpur contain the clearest expositions of his ideas on this point. "You are accustomed to conduct your statecraft through deceit and diplomacy; I approve of naught but that it accords with the principles of ethics and the dictates of conscience," said he in *Fatehnama*.* "He alone is a cultured man, he alone worthy of the name of human being

**turā turaklāzī ba makaro riṃyā, marā cara sūzī ba sidaḡo safā*

whose 'yea' is 'yea' and whose 'nay' is 'nay!' He who says one thing and means and intends another is sub-human," was what he declared in the second letter, *Zafarnama*.^{*} From the days of Plato and Aristotle in European thought, culminating in the brilliant exposition of statecraft by Machiavelli, it has been assumed that the principles which govern the conduct of kings and inter-state relations are different from those which govern individual conduct. The *danda-nīti* and the *rājyanīti*, as preached and practiced in India from time immemorial and as brilliantly explained in the 2000 year's old *Arthashastra* of Kautiliyas, accept this dichotomy as valid and necessary and not till after the second world war was it seriously questioned. The principle of open diplomacy was never accepted as a working hypothesis for inter-state relations and has never been accepted as a working principle between rulers and the ruled.

It was Guru Gobind Singh's passionate conviction that unless this principle was accepted and implemented in both spheres—the sphere of relations between the rulers and the ruled and between states on the international level—the emergence

of a universal culture as the basis for global fraternity was not possible. That the human mind has recently awakened to the urgency of this truth is no mean tribute to the prescience and genius of Guru Gobind Singh.

The other lever which is the fifth and the last idea inherent in this Baisakhi was the creation of a *saṅgha* or, as we would say in modern political parlance, a party, for the avowed purpose of facilitating the emergence of the global fraternity. Such a *saṅgha* in the very nature of things must be a group of persons dedicated to a cause which may include political activity. It is in this context that the litany repeated in every Sikh congregation throughout the world every morning and evening to the effect that "the Khalsa shall rule and none shall defy them" is to be understood and appreciated.

The Khalsa order, as divorced from political activity and not dedicated to the achievement of political ends, aiming at the eventual establishment of universal equality and global fraternity, has no intelligible connotation. The Guru recognized the validity and force of the Marxist stand about two centuries earlier than the Marxists formulated it in

^{*}*hamāñ marād bāid śavad sukhanvar, na śikame digar dar dihanē digar.*

that no amount of education or religious refinement was enough, as had been tacitly presumed throughout the ages of Indian history, unless the refined and emancipated man, the man who combined in himself wisdom and power, both *jñāna* and *śakti* in equal degrees, had control of the organized military power which was the state always. The Guru's statements on this point are startlingly clear and uncompromising.*

Under the impact of world wars, revolutions and dictatorships we are witnessing a revival of interest in heroes and hero-worship. At the dawn of the 19th century Thomas Carlyle and Friedrich Nietzsche spoke in defence of aristocracy, of establishing the rule of the elite. Spangler and D. H. Lawrence were unequivocal supporters of the idea that the powers of governing the common multitude should rest in the hands of the trained few.

Such ideas, backed by the dialectical philosophy of Hegel which so raised the state to the status of the absolute, an entity over and above the multitude that it ruled, resulted in modern Fascist and Nazi systems

of government based on the principle of party dictatorship whether in theory or in practice or both.

It has sometimes been thought, especially by Nietzsche, that our own Manav-dharma-sastra by ordaining the military caste of *ksatriyas* supported the Fascist idea and the doctrine of party dictatorship. But less superficial consideration makes it clear that the basic impulses of the Institutes of Manu were antagonistic to the Fascist idea insofar as they created a military caste for the specific and statutory purpose of defending the weak against the powerful, upholding right against wrong and punishing those who practiced tyranny and were unjust. It was this impulse embedded in the Manav-dharma-sastra which was taken up and carried forth by Guru Gobind Singh in his concept of the order of the Khalsa.

As Thomas Jefferson wrote to James in 1813, "...for I agree that there is a natural aristocracy among men. The grounds of this are virtue and talent. The natural aristocracy I consider as the most precious gift of nature, for the instruction, trusts, and the government of the society,"

**tab im bhaneō garīb nivāj,
śastran ke adhīn hai rāj;
binā rāj nahī dharam cale hai.*

Gurbilas: Sukha Singh

so did Guru Gobind Singh believe that such an aristocracy dedicated and consciously trained, grounded in virtue, talent and in the self-imposed code of sacrifice and discipline of service to humanity—but not by right of birth—such men should group themselves into the Khalsa for the purpose of 'the instruction, the trusts and the government of society.'

Guru Gobind Singh certainly seemed to believe that aristocracy was one of the goals of democracy, for what is more basic to democracy than 'carriers open to talent,' a doctrine which so clearly presumes that talent is of supreme value? The Guru believed that democracy could justify itself only by including aristocracy as its goal and because democracy alone could guarantee the freest scope to talent, was, it would seem, the Guru's reason for having faith in it.

Such an aristocracy it was which Guru Gobind Singh founded as the order of the Khalsa in 1699.

The four ideas which are manifest from the Baisakhi of 30 March 1699 have been discussed. This is the fifth and last idea.

At Baisakhi the sun reaches the highest point of its orbit called *ucca* in the Hindu system and *aux* in the

Medieval European system of astronomy. In the terms of the lunar mansions, the *nakṣatras*, Baisakhi is equivalent to *alpha*, *beta* and *gamma* of the Librae zodiac. This is the final point of the freezing static period and the beginning of the regeneration of the earth when the vegetation fully emerges from its slumber and death period and ripens into its final fruition. This is the end of experimentation, the summer and the growth and at this point the growth matures into ripeness and abundance.

Earlier in Indian history, on the same day, Gautam Buddha received enlightenment and heralded the dawn of a new society and a new world for "the good and benefit of all living things, mortal and immortal." Guru Gobind Singh deliberately chose Baisakhi as the day for founding the Khalsa with the significance of ushering in the dawn of a new and regenerated society which was to rise in accordance with the Phoenix principle, the principle of resurrection. The ceremony of the demand of human heads in the cause of the *dharma* and the subsequent presentation of the newly born Five Beloveds to the public assembly can mean only some such dynamic and awesome idea.

It was this idea to which he gave expression by demanding the heads of living persons and then by taking them into the tent or inner sanctuary where each individual must meet his God in death before he is qualified to live and to lead and to serve the world. Such were the Five Beloved Ones who had thus met death by submerging their little egos into the universal Spirit and who received the baptism of steel and were thus qualified to rule and govern through service.

It was in this background that Guru Gobind Singh identified God with death and gave Him the epithet of All-Steel. That this was in essence

the idea is not in doubt when we read certain poetic compositions of his contemporary poets such as Bhai Gurdas Singh who received the immediate impact of the idea and the living personality of Guru Gobind Singh on this occasion.

Such is the true significance and real meaning of Baisakhi of 30 March 1699 which Guru Gobind Singh celebrated in the sub-mountain town of Anandpur at the foot of the Sivalak hills of the Himalayas and that is why he shouted: "The order of the Khalsa is of God and His the final victory—*vaheguruji kã khãlsã, vaheguruji kã fateh.*"

Few persons have courage enough to appear as good as they really are.

J. C. Hare